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The Value of Wildlife Extension

For me this is a real home-coming -- to old friends, fellow workers and members of the Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. While serving in the Regional Office of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife from 1953 to 1959 I had the good fortune and pleasure to be a member of this Chapter.

This Chapter can be extremely proud of the role it has played and is now playing in strengthening your local group through improving professionalism and a constant sharing of knowledge and exposure to new intellectual experiences. Beyond this you have a continuing strong influence on the parent Society -- a wholesome influence, exercised from a position of strong leadership.

As soon as the Code of Ethics developed by this Chapter was issued, I had it framed and proudly displayed it on my office wall. It has remained with me to this date and occupies a conspicuous place in my new office. Some years later, the parent Society adopted a code, patterned after that of this Chapter.

Thank you so much for the invitation to return. Now, to the business at hand.

It may seem strange indeed for me, a representative of the Department of the Interior and Chief of a new Division dedicated to rendering wildlife services, to come here to speak on behalf of wildlife extension, a program administered by the Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the respective State Extension Services and in many cases, State fish and game departments. It would seem that I am beating someone else's drum. Not so.

Let me digress for just a moment to point out that I have now been round the horn, so to speak. I worked for the Utah State Department of Fish and Game; then for this Bureau; left for a six-year stint with the Extension Services of Utah State University; and, in June of last year, returned to this Bureau to work in a program that uses some extension methods and works closely with the Extension Services in several States. With this background I think you can understand my interest in extension. As a matter of fact we now have personnel housed on several University campuses, with staff privileges and professional rank. In this Region, Purdue is a notable example. We intend to increase the number of these relationships.

Now, back to my reason for coming here to discuss the values of wildlife extension and urge that those in positions of leadership in this Bureau, in the Universities, the fish and game departments and others, stimulate the establishment of wildlife extension programs.

Please understand -- I do not speak on behalf of the Extension Services, only from the standpoint of past experiences and my present vantage point.

First, there is far more to be done in wisely managing our wildlife resources than all agencies and institutions can possibly hope to accomplish. There is room for everyone, but no room for petty jealousies or artificial prerogatives.

One of the important objectives of our Bureau is to create a favorable climate for the management and enjoyment of wildlife, both game and nongame species. By working with and through wildlife extension programs, we see an opportunity to further this objective and at the same time strengthen the State wildlife extension programs. As we have stated before, our Bureau does not intend to duplicate or compete with existing programs but rather to complement these and provide services not now being provided. As you know, we use extension methods and will expand this approach in animal control and wildlife enhancement, but this is quite different from "extension services."

At the risk of telling many of you here what you may already know, let me briefly describe what extension is. The Cooperative Extension Service is primarily an education service, organized with offices and professional staff on a county, State, and Federal partnership basis. It was created by the Smith-Lever Act of Congress in 1914 and originally aimed primarily at the rural population. Extension now aims to serve all of the people, and it has been broadened to engage in program planning on a broad, long-term basis.

Extension is the off-campus arm of land grant universities. All extension services have a staff of specialists in a wide variety of fields -- agronomy, agricultural economics, radio and TV, veterinary science, sociology, farm planning, recreation and so on. The services of this staff are made available to the public through the county agents. The county agents, in turn, are among the most influential and respected men in their communities.

Here is an extensive organization, with its nerve center on a university campus, grass roots ties in local communities and channels extending to the Nation's capital. This is an organization that is in touch with every agricultural activity; and, with an expanding program, it will soon touch on every phase of community life.

Why should there be wildlife extension? We might reverse the question and ask, "How can we conceive of a broad extension program that does not include wildlife, a most important resource?"

Wildlife extension is now gaining acceptance as one of the valid tools of wildlife management and as one of the important spheres of responsibility of the land grant institutions. At last count, there were 22 States with a program in wildlife extension.

Wildlife extension has not been well understood. This may partially account for its slow acceptance. Perhaps, too, it is because the 22 programs are all different -- wildlife extension means different things in different places.

In short, extension has been a neglected area, and I would like to point out its potential and its importance to a balanced wildlife management program.

Professional wildlife managers and administrators point with pride to the fact that wildlife management has grown up; that fishing and hunting is a "big business"; and, that management has achieved a degree of competence never before realized.

Wildlife management has, indeed, grown up -- in fact, it has "grown clear out of its britches." Not too long ago, wildlife management was concerned with protective legislation and law enforcement; control of predators; and the stocking of fish and fowl. These were operations over which game departments had direct control and were able to handle. These functions also took place at a period in our history when there was more open land and fewer people.

But, times have changed and so have game departments. Researchers, coordinators, public relations men, and even farm planners are now

commonly employed to cope with changing conditions. Obviously, this is not enough. Why?

The answer is quite simple. Game departments are now faced with problems and situations over which they have no control. Pesticides, drainage, highway planning, pollution and a score of others are examples of activities that directly affect wildlife and over which the game departments have little or no control. And, decisions concerning these activities are not made in game department offices.

The management of wildlife resources has become enmeshed in the intricacies of a complex civilization. It has, in the words of Dansereau, arrived at the time when such management agencies as the game departments, the Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies cannot solve wildlife problems alone.

Wildlife resource needs must be considered in a broadened sphere -- by industry, education and agriculture. This is where extension comes in. Through its many contacts, extension touches on every phase of agriculture from plowing to policy. If the wildlife resource is to receive the consideration it deserves, it must be included. It is concerned at every level with pesticides, range use, water use and many other subjects vital to wildlife management. If wildlife is to receive full status as a resource of the land, it must obviously receive consideration when decisions concerning other resources are being made. In other words, wildlife needs must be considered at the planning level -- before, not after the fact.

This, then, is the first and most significant benefit from establishment of a wildlife extension program: recognition of the wildlife resource by the Extension Service; the university; and by agreement; the Department of Agriculture, all in cooperation with a fish and game department. And, with establishment and recognition is included the assurance that the wildlife resource will receive equal attention and consideration with other uses of the land.

This recognition is far from hollow, as is too often the case. For example, when Utah State University prepares its annual pest control recommendations, the Wildlife Specialist is consulted to determine the possible effects on wildlife. Similarly, other staff decisions concerned with policy, youth work, recommended farm practices and so on, all consider the role of wildlife. In short, wildlife becomes an equal partner at the conference table where the decisions that affect its future are made.

Obviously, all differences will not be resolved, nor can all decisions favor the wildlife resource. But, here is concrete progress with the wildlife resource being considered at every level.

A second benefit of wildlife extension is that the entire services of the extension organization become available to the solution of wildlife problems. In addition to the talents of the staff of specialists in agriculture and related fields, there is the news service -- TV, radio and the press.

The land grant institutions have fine news services -- complete information and education sections. Press, radio and TV coverage is excellent. Radio tapes reach the larger stations, news releases go to every daily and weekly newspaper and there are always more TV opportunities than can be used. Of special significance is the fact that extension reaches a different public than usually reached by game departments. Extension coverage reaches the business and agricultural pages, and the farm broadcasts.

Beyond this, the entire resources of a university become available through the Extension Service. This is no small thing considering the highly skilled and varied staff and the excellent facilities available, including expensive laboratory facilities.

Education is, of course, the assumed benefit from extension and it is the traditional extension function. But, there are many types of education. It can be of the usual variety, directed to large or small groups using various types of media. It can also be specific. Extension and agricultural personnel need to be educated to wildlife values, needs and problems. By the same token, game department and other wildlife personnel need to be educated to the needs, problems and attitudes of land users. This type of education can and often is an individual thing -- very specific and very effective. It is useful in committees, policy sessions and so on. It is an important phase of education.

State game departments are "sportsmen oriented." The production and harvest of game, on the other hand, is closely related to agriculture. There is a crying need for improving relationships with agriculture. The Extension Service is a "ready-made" organization, staffed and equipped for dealing with agricultural interests.

Time will not permit a full accounting of the many benefits to be derived from establishing a wildlife extension program. In brief, wildlife extension is a means of adding a new and deeper dimension to wildlife management . . . a means of bringing wildlife and agricultural interests to a closer association and cooperation.

Injecting wildlife thinking into agricultural circles is generally stressed. Of equal importance is the need for injecting agricultural thinking into wildlife circles. There are mutual benefits in tearing down the barriers of provincialism.

Wildlife management agencies take great pride in scientifically managing wildlife resources. A few years back this was the ideal. Today, it is not enough. Scientific management alone falls short of the mark. And, an agency that prides itself solely on scientific management is not only behind the times, but on its way out of business.

Scientific, biological management leaves many socio-economic and political problems unsolved. Wildlife extension is a means of helping with the solution of these problems -- a well-directed wildlife extension program, properly aimed, is a potent management tool, a means of implementing and of giving real meaning to the multiple-use concept.

I have stressed the importance of extension as a wildlife resource management tool and only alluded to the importance to a university of including wildlife in its extension program. It is important to a university for the same reasons it is important to those charged with the direct responsibility for managing wildlife resources.

With a broader charter, institutions with an interest and responsibility in land and water resources must certainly consider wildlife as a product of those resources -- not only because of esthetic but for economic reasons.

And, with an increasing slice of the American public expressing an interest in our wildlife resources, there is clearly a need to serve that public.

Having praised the merits of extension generally and wildlife extension in particular, let me put my own hat back on and talk briefly on how we in my Bureau intend to cooperate with the Federal Extension Service and State Extension Services.

We are currently renegotiating our Bureau's memorandum of understanding. When this is accomplished, we hope for a complete exchange of information. We plan to provide State wildlife specialists with information available through our Bureau. This can then be used in the State programs, providing the State programs with a broader base of information and providing our Bureau with added outlets in reaching the public. We plan also to make our information available to county agents who will be in a better position to answer queries on wildlife.

We also have a pilot project at North Dakota State University. In this instance, the State Game and Fish Department and our Bureau are contributing financially to the establishment of a wildlife extension program. If this works out as anticipated, we will do likewise in other States as funds and opportunities become available.

It is our intent to improve the management of wildlife resources by working hand in hand with other agencies and institutions. We view the opportunity for working with the Extension Services as a splendid opportunity for different Departments of the Federal Government, in cooperation with State agencies and institutions, to work together to accomplish mutual objectives.

Again, may I compliment the Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society and urge your individual and collective support of the Chapter and The Society. And, I thank you for the privilege of talking with you.

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